



Friends of Firbeck Hall

NEWSLETTER

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Chairman's Report

We hope that 2016 will mark a significant year in the history of Firbeck Hall.

With that in mind, I am delighted to report that despite the continued lack of physical activity on site, substantial progress is being made behind the scenes. Our relationship with the new owners continues to develop positively, and we are pleased to be able to report that they are pressing on with the project with a significant degree of enthusiasm. We have now had sight of plans which are in the final stages of being prepared for submission as a full planning application. The outstanding tasks to enable this process to begin in earnest are now largely administrative. This process includes a review by the district valuer in order to determine the values, scope and milestones that will be required within a section 106 agreement. This agreement should provide the framework for securing the future of the Hall whilst enabling the developers to create a commercially viable economic plan for the whole site. This process is understandably complex and absorbs yet more time but is

necessary to both guarantee the future for the Hall and ultimately enable the project to be properly funded.

The latest plans have been prepared by the architects at Building Link Design in Doncaster. This is the same firm that have been involved with the project for several years. The plans we have seen represent a very logical progression from the work done by the previous owner and we hope to be able to bring further details of these to our Friends and the local community via an open meeting and through our usual bulletins and website.

Interest in both the history and the future of Firbeck Hall continues to grow steadily, and I am very pleased to report that our Friends now extend to more than 500 people. If you are reading this and you have not already joined and would like to do so, please send an email to friends@firbeckhall.net and we will do the rest!

Simon Drohan
March 2016

Firbeck cum Letwell WI – an early history
by Valerie Oxley



The Women's Institute movement started in Britain in 1915, village Institutes were often instigated by the Lady of the Manor, who then became their first President. Locally, this task fell to Lady Matthews, who on July 11th 1946 called a meeting in the village hall in Letwell, which several ladies from Firbeck, Letwell and Gildingwells attended. Lady Matthews proposed an Institute should be formed called Firbeck cum Letwell WI.

Nationally the WI was campaigning for more flexible hours for visiting children in hospital, an improvement in the number and condition of railway lavatories, an improvement in the provision of junior schools in villages and an improvement in medical services. There was concern about the closure of village post offices and there was a need for well-equipped village halls to use as meeting places. They were also campaigning for provision of a bus service to take country people to the towns.

The first meeting was held at Four Lane Ends, Firbeck and was addressed by Mrs Skipwith, President of Loversal WI. Afterwards she judged a competition for a posy in an egg-cup. The meeting closed with the singing of 'God Save the King'. In October the meeting was held in Letwell and was followed by a social half hour with Mrs Farnsworth at the piano and solos given by Mrs Harold Skinn from the Black Lion, Firbeck. In November there was a draw for a pair of silk stockings which had been brought from Switzerland and donated by Mrs Baker. Mr Geoffrey Farnsworth spoke about his recent visit to Sweden at the December meeting and judged the paper hat competition. He provided a dozen eggs for an extra raffle prize and the meeting concluded with the singing of carols by the Institute choir.

The speaker failed to turn up for the meeting the following April which was held at the NAAFI in Firbeck. The founding President, Mrs Blakeney gave an impromptu talk on the 'Experiences of a Parson's Wife'.

Institute members were encouraged to collect rose hips, for rose hip syrup at the July 1947 meeting.

The talk at this meeting was about bottling fruits for home use and for produce stalls. At the August meeting it was decided to form a Produce Guild with Mrs Farnsworth as Secretary. The talk at this meeting was 'First Aid in the Home'.

In September 1947, a questionnaire was received from Headquarters asking if there were people in Firbeck and Letwell who were trained in the duties of laying out the dead. It was also reported that the President had been unable to attend the Autumn Council Meeting in York due to a shortage of petrol.

There were 46 members at the end of 1947.

By 1948 Firbeck cum Letwell WI was well established. A talk in February by Miss Rose of the Education Department in Doncaster was called 'How to make the most of one's 'Rations' each member received two sheets of recipes.

Miss Rose returned again in May to speak about 'Laundry in the Home' and a competition for the best household hint was won by Mrs Batty.

In November 1948, a letter from the Central Office of Information was received urging mothers to have their children immunised against diphtheria before their first birthday. A talk was given by the St John's Ambulance Brigade about 'Home Nursing'.

In March 1949, Mrs Wilkinson of the West Riding Advisory Board gave a practical demonstration on 'Skin Curing in the Home' and Mrs Hall provided a rabbit. Mrs Wilkinson brought a case of cured skins for members to examine and the competition was for the best article made from a flour-bag.

In May 1949, a gift of food stuffs in tins was received from Australia, it was decided to raffle the tins at each meeting to raise funds for the Institute. The speaker that afternoon was Miss Elliott who gave an interesting talk about West Africa which she had visited when nursing with the RAF.

The winner of the matchbox containing the largest amount of items was won by Mrs Hall with 122 items. In September a demonstration on vegetable canning was given by Mrs Constable, and the Institute requested the loan of a canning machine for the third week in August and the middle of September. Later, during the summer of 1949 Mrs Skinn was presented with a pair of gloves as a mark of appreciation for her kindness in allowing her kitchen at the Black Lion public house to be used for canning fruit.

Firbeck cum Letwell WI flourished during the 1950's. Mrs Wilkinson was invited back to talk on pig curing and storage in February 1951. In 1953 village transport had not improved and an application for a bus service through the villages of Firbeck and Letwell was rejected by Rotherham

Transport. In October 1957 a letter was received from the Yorkshire Federation Secretary to say that Firbeck cum Letwell WI had permission to transfer to the Nottinghamshire Federation and in November it was announced that the transfer had taken place. It would be many years before the WI returned to Yorkshire and become part of the South Yorkshire Federation of Women's Institutes.

The History of Archery in Firbeck

By Valerie Oxley



Jonathan Stanyforth, (1702 – 1779) © Chisties

A portrait of a young Jonathan Stanyforth of Firbeck Hall shows him with a bow and arrow in a park setting, with a black and white King Charles spaniel looking up to him. The bow and arrow symbolises he is a male child and the park setting symbolises his future inheritance, the Firbeck Hall Estate. The black and white dog may symbolise love and loyalty. The portrait was painted by Thomas Murray (1663 – 1735), and was offered for sale at Christies in 2009, by Sir Richard FitzHerbert of Tissington Hall, it raised over £23,000. This is the earliest reference to archery and Firbeck that we have discovered.

There was a revival in archery as an upper-class pursuit from around 1780-1840. Archery societies were set up across the country, and recreational archery soon became extravagant social and ceremonial events. The clubs soon came to play an important role in social networks, they were popular with young women who could not only compete in contests but could exhibit grace and elegance whilst doing so and the clubs became a platform for flirtation and romance.

The first reference to Archery as a competitive sport with targets in our area, is from the minutes of the Tickhill Castle Archery Society, whose inaugural meeting was held in Doncaster on 16th July 1833. Interestingly, the following meeting of the Society's committee was held at Park Hill, Firbeck on 27th August 1833. It is difficult to know who was living at Park Hill at this time, as the committee met during a period when Park Hill was rented out by Anthony Butler St Leger.

We know that in 1823 the Reverend Frederick Sutton Manners and his wife Lady Henrietta Barbara Lumley were living at Park Hill, Firbeck with their young family.

Thomas Wollaston White and Lady White of Wallingwells Hall are among those listed as attending the inaugural meeting of the Tickhill Castle Archers in 1833. Other people mentioned are Frederick Lumley Savile, his wife and daughters from Tickhill Castle, the Ramsdens from Carlton Hall the Athorpes from Dinnington Hall and the Walkers from Clifton House, Rotherham.

To jump to 1885, a report in the Nottingham Post describes a meeting of the Robin Hood Lawn Tennis and Archery Club at Thoresby Park. Attending the shoot were Mrs Jebb, the Misses Jebb and Mr Jebb from Firbeck Hall. They were the wife and children of the Reverend Henry Gladwin Jebb, who inherited Firbeck Hall on the death of his aunt, Frances Harriott Miles.

In 1901, the Firbeck Parish Magazine, reported that *'the Ladies of Park Hill School performed a Pastoral Play and a Japanese Operetta, in the beautiful grounds of Park Hill, Firbeck to help raise money for the improvement of the Rectory. Despite glorious weather, attendance fell short of the number expected. However, £15 9s 6d was handed to the Rector and was considered a substantial little nest egg with which to open an account at Messrs Beckett & Co.'s Bank, Worksop. Tea was served on the archery ground at one shilling per head.'*

The archery ground has long since gone and it is difficult now to imagine where it might have been situated.



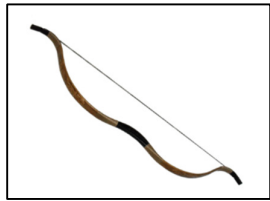
The Firbeck Archers at Costhorpe
Photo by permission of Michael & Carole Burgan.

Interestingly, the Firbeck Archers were formed in the late twentieth century. David Millward, first Archer in the line up of the Firbeck Archers at Costhorpe above, was a member of the Firbeck Archers and a member of the Rotherham Art Society. One of the highlights of the Firbeck Archers' calendar was a shoot to commemorate the Battle of Crecy in 1346 when a small army of English and Welsh Archers helped to defeat a much larger army of French soldiers.



The Battle of Crécy

David designed the targets for a re-enactment of the Battle of Crecy. More recently, the 7th Firbeck Crecy Shoot was re-enacted in September 2015 by the Chantry Bowmen of Rotherham. Over 70 archers shooting recurve or longbows, together with some Scythian horse bows, shot at targets up to 160 yards away.



An example of a Scythian Horse bow

Apparently, as usual, most arrows landed in the grass, making a spectacular sight in itself.

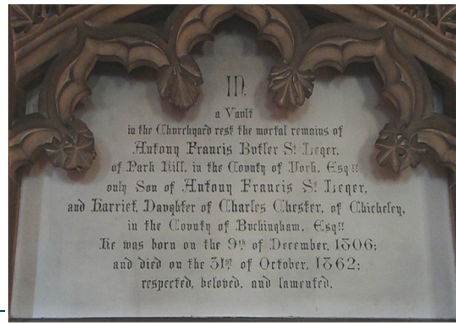


An Original Knight on Horseback as seen at the Firbeck Crécy Shoot from 1980 to 1989

In the shoot there were full size two dimensional targets of Knights on Horseback at 120 yards, Men at Arms at 80 yards and Crossbow men behind shields at 60 yards.

Interest in archery declined and was in part replaced by tennis and croquet. If you have any information about Firbeck and Archery please contact us, we will be very interested to hear from you.

The A F B St Leger stained glass window in Firbeck Church by Julia Colver



The A F B St Leger Window and his Memorial

Valerie Oxley and I had been somewhat perplexed about the above memorials in the church showing A F B St Leger with what we thought were two differing dates of death. The window reads “**In memoriam Sororis Dilectae A F B St Leger 1854**” and yet his memorial on the wall alongside clearly states he died in 1862.

Naturally we had to look into this and after many fruitless hours of searching we discovered that the Latin inscription on the window “Sororis Dilectae” actually means ‘**Beloved Sister**’. On researching his sister we found that she was called Catherine Louisa and married the Rev Samuel Thomas Townsend on 18th February 1828 at St George’s, Hanover Square, London. He was Rector of Chicheley, Bucks and later Rector of Farndish in Bedfordshire. After she died he married Elise Cadogan.

Therefore the window is a memorial to A F B St Leger’s sister, Catherine Louisa St Leger.

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